

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 06881 171353Z

43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DPW-01

AID-20 DRC-01 /111 W

----- 059729

R 171200Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6144

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

COMUSSAGE

UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 6881

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI CB

SUBJ: CORRECTION OF PRESS ACCOUNTS OF MAY 15 MEKONG LOSSES

REF: STATE 102657

1. AMBASSADOR AVAILED HIMSELF OF OPPORTUNITY OFFERED BY PERIODIC MEETING WITH U.S. PRESS REPRESENTATIVES HERE TODAY (MAY 17) TO CORRECT ERRONEOUS PRESS REPORTS OF MAY 15 CONVOY LOSSES. NOTING THAT HIS REMARKS STEMMED FROM DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL AND FROM HOPE THAT JOURNALISTS WILL IN FUTURE MAKE USE OF MISSION'S KNOWLEDGE TO CHECK THEIR INFORMATION, AMBASSADOR MADE FOLLOWING POINT BY POINT COMMENTS ON INFORMATION CITED FIRST PARAGRAPH REFTEL:

A. WE DO NOT VIEW THIS ATTACK, WHICH CONSISTED OF 75 MM, B-41, 50 CAL MG FIRE FROM THREE LOCATIONS AND DAMAGE INFLICTED ONLY AT TWO LOCATIONS AS "HEAVIEST OF CURRENT DRY SEASON". VOLUME OF FIRE WAS HEAVIER, MORE CRAFT WERE HIT AND MORE LOSSES WERE SUSTAINED (AMMO BARGE WAS LOST) ON FEB. 18 OF THIS YEAR.

B. THE REPORT THAT ONE AMMO BARGE WAS SUNK AND
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PAGE 02 PHNOM 06881 171353Z

ANOTHER TANKER SET ABLAZE IS INACCURATE. NO VESSEL

OF ANY TYPE WAS SUNK. NO AMMO BARGES WERE DAMAGED.
ONE POL TANKER WAS DAMAGED AND SET AFIRE, BUT THE
FIRE WAS EXTINGUISHED. THIS SHIP WAS TOWED IN FROM
NEAK LUONG AND IS BEING REPAIRED IN PHNOM PENH. ONE
TUG TOOK 75 MM FIRE WHICH DAMAGED THE PILOT HOUSE
AND STEERAGE. IT WAS ALSO TOWED TO PHNOM PENH,
WHERE IT IS BEING REPAIRED.

C. THE REPORT THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY VALUES AMMO
ON SUNKEN BARGE AT 1.5 MILLION IS, OF COURSE, NOT TRUE
AS NO BARGE WAS SUNK. IN FACT THERE WAS NEGLIGIBLE
IF ANY DAMAGE TO CARGO . THE FIRE ON THE POL TANKER
WAS EXTINGUISHED WITH NO LOSS OF POL PRODUCTS.

2. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER ANY OF THE JOURNALISTS WILL
RETRACT OR CORRECT ERRONEOUS STORIES BUT I AM
INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THIS FRANK EXCHANGE WILL
CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHEN EXISTING GOOD RELATIONS WITH LOCAL
AMERICAN PRESS CORPS.
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Message Attributes

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